

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 23 April 2014** at **2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor J Marr (Chairman)

Durham County Council:

Councillors D Bell, K Corrigan, B Moir, M Plews (Vice-Chairman), D Stoker and K Thompson

Spennymoor Town Council:

Town Councillors JV Graham and GD O'Hehir

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from A Bonner, J Buckham, J Chaplow, P Conway, N Foster and M Simmons.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 24 January 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed and initialled by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4 Appointment of Clerk to the Joint Committee

The Chairman referred Members to the Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Durham County Council (DCC) recommending the appointment of Laura Renaudon, Solicitor – Planning and Development, DCC as Clerk to the Joint Committee. The Chairman asked for any questions prior to the Solicitor withdrawing from the meeting while discussions took place.

The Solicitor left the meeting and Members discussed the content of the report and the recommendation for the appointment. Members unanimously agreed with the recommendation and the Solicitor was asked to return to the meeting.

Resolved:

That Laura Renaudon, Solicitor – Planning and Development, Durham County Council be appointed as the Clerk to the Joint Committee with immediate effect.

5 Quarterly Performance and Operational Report

The Bereavement Services Manager, Graham Harrison asked Members to note the performance figures from January 2014 to March 2014 and the comparison to the same period for 2013, highlighting that there was a net decrease of 146 cremations. It was noted there was a total of 584 for the three month period with the January to March profile breakdown showing 190 from Durham, 38 from Spennymoor and 356 from outside of the area. Councillors were asked to note that the figures for the comparable period 2012/13 were exceptional, noting the long winter and higher mortality rates compared to 2013/14. Members noted that while the total number of cremations for 2013/14 was 2,227, in comparison to a total of 2,379 for 2012/13, estimates had been made on a prudent basis and the figure was still above the budget number of 2,140 cremations.

The Committee noted similar reductions in cremations in comparison to last year at Mountsett Crematorium, reports from Funeral Directors as regards fewer numbers, and contacts at IFZW confirming similar reductions of 8-12% in Germany also. The Bereavement Services Manager referred Members to a graph showing information from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), highlighting the lower mortality rates in Quarter 4, 2013. It was noted that a survey of Funeral Directors would be undertaken and a brochure be produced promoting the services available.

Members were asked to note that the number of memorials sold had increased significantly in comparison to the same period the previous year, with sales being £17,473.02 more than the comparable period last year. It was explained that, as reported previously, a backlog exercise undertaken by Crematorium staff had contributed to the increase.

The Joint Committee noted that usual arrangements as regards attendance at the Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain, held 7 to 9 of July 2014, had been made for the Bereavement Services Manager and Councillor J Marr.

The Joint Committee were informed that the crematorium team were now operating with all staff, with a member of the team having gained certification in the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities' training and examination scheme for Crematorium Technicians.

Councillors noted that the Recycling of Metals Scheme had generated a sum of £4,412 for Macmillan Cancer Support. The Bereavement Services Manager noted Members could provide further nominations at the Chairman as regards charities that could benefit from the scheme.

The Bereavement Services Manager referred Members to the amended programme of works and projected costs relating to Crematorium Improvement Works. It was added that upon speaking to colleagues in the Planning Section, there was no requirement for a planning application, rather the works were allowed under Part 12 of the General Permitted Development Order.

Members asked if Phase III was deferred could there be potential increased disruption to operations at the Crematorium and potential increased costs by having two separate stages of works rather than carrying out the works from Phase I to Phase III contiguously.

The Principal Accountant, Jo McMahon noted that Phases I and II could be funded through various options, including the use of reserves. It was added that, as noted by several Members, it would be for the Joint Committee to decide upon Phase III at a future meeting.

Resolved:

- (i) That the current performance of the Crematorium be noted.
- (ii) That the plan to produce a brochure and survey in order to promote the service be approved.
- (iii) That the current performance with regards to the sale of Memorials be noted.
- (iv) That the attendance of the Chairman, Councillor J Marr and the Bereavement Services Manager at the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain Conference and Exhibition 2013 be approved.
- (v) That the current tranche of money from the recycling of metals scheme to Macmillan Cancer Support be noted, with Members nominating further charities for future disbursements at a future meeting.
- (vi) That the updated/revised funding requirements for the redevelopment be noted and for Phase I to progress as planned.

6 Financial Monitoring Report - Provisional Outturn as at 31 March 2014

The Principal Accountant referred Members to the Financial Monitoring Report, as set out in the usual format, with the provisional outturn as at 31 March 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Joint Committee noted that the income and expenditure were broadly in line with the base budget and the major variances were set out within the report. It was explained that the provisional outturn position showed a net income of £135,870 above the base budget to be included in the major capital works reserves as previously agreed by Members. Members noted a projected Reserve of approximately £1.34 Million at the year-end, giving a strong financial position.

Resolved:

That the April 2013 to March 2014 Revenue Spend Financial Monitoring Report and associated Provision Outturn position at 31 March 2014 be noted.

7 Annual Internal Audit Report 2013/14

The Chairman introduced the Principal Auditor, Internal Audit, David Mitchell who was in attendance to speak to Members as regards the Annual Internal Audit Report 2013/14 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Auditor thanked Members for the opportunity to present the report on behalf of the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager and reminded the Joint Committee that the Annual Internal Audit Report fulfilled the requirements of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and CIPFA Local Government Application note for the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager to deliver an annual audit opinion. It was added that this in turn would then inform the Annual Governance Statement, to be considered by the Joint Committee at its next meeting.

Members were informed that the report looked at the Joint Committee's systems of governance, risk management and internal control and that from the work undertaken the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager was able to provide a "Full" overall assurance opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control operating across the Joint Committee in 2013/14.

The Chair thanked the Principal Auditor, and the Joint Committee thanked the Officers involved in respect of their hard work in achieving the "Full" overall assurance opinion.

Resolved:

That the content of the Annual Internal Audit Report and the overall "Full" opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Joint Committee's control environment for 2013/14 be noted.

8 Term of Office

The Chairman noted that, in response to a query raised prior to the Committee, Members were appointed for a period of 4 years to the Joint Committee, Paragraph 3.4 of the Terms of Reference refers:

3.4 "In the year 2013 and every fourth year thereafter being a year in which Members of the Joint Committee shall retire each of the two Councils shall appoint Members of the Joint Committee as herein provided at the first convenient meeting of such Councils".

Councillors were reminded this was notwithstanding the other provisions within the Terms of Reference in respect of each of the constituent Councils' powers in respect of appointment of Members.

Resolved:

That the information be noted.